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San Bernardino County Government Center  
Supervisor Neil Derry  
385 N Arrowhead Ave, Fifth Floor  
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0110

July 26, 2011

Dear Neil,

The HVCC has voted to write to you supporting your opposition to ABX1 29.

We understand it is easy for Sacramento to impose fees on a small scattered population, with few resources to fight back, and few votes to be counted in statewide elections. It is possible that voters in urban areas might impose just such an unjust \$150 tax on selected rural residents of the county, but at least we would get to vote on it!

We question how such a fee could be levied so arbitrarily on properties to one side of a road and not the other. Hwy 247 passes through a countryside that is indistinguishable as to fire hazard qualities whichever way one looks.

Public education on fire prevention is a good thing. The concept of defensible space is a good thing. Organizations like HVCC are more than happy to circulate without charge any information received from the Fire Department, and already do. We can do more.

It is interesting to note that the \$150 fee will also go toward fire hazard mapping in the State Responsibility Areas.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFIRE) has already posted a series of Fire & Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) Maps on their website.

**A quick look at a few of these maps seem to show the areas targeted by ABX1 29 are not high fire risk areas.**

- San Bernardino County is not included in the list of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.
- The Surface Fuels map page shows the high thick grass like oat grass, common in higher elevations but not seen anywhere near Hwy 247.
- Fire Threat Map: Moderate (the lowest grading)
- Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map: Once you get down out of the mountains, we don't even rate a "moderate."
- Fire Perimeters map: fire history since 1950, generally 300-acre minimum for CDF fires and 10-acre minimum for USFS fires, but many smaller fires as well: NO FIRES shown in the area to be taxed.

As Commander Dave Benfield has assured us, the type of vegetation coverage in our areas does not support the types of wildfires that create so much havoc at higher elevations with more rainfall. Not to say that such a thing could not happen, but the type of fuel and the far between structures makes it unlikely.

We know the Fire Departments are tightening their belts. But will this really help them? Establishing more bureaucracy with new costs and the might of the State Board of Equalization collecting the "fee," is all wrong in an era where state government is already perceived to be a burden on the governed. In the long run we do not trust that the owners of structures subject to this fee will benefit. We see other taxes and fees being swallowed into the general fund for purposes we did not get to vote on.

Please continue to let people know that this fee is *not* for fire protection.

Thank you for taking the lead in defending the people of San Bernardino County against this questionable fee. We are asking the other supervisors to join you in this effort.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Harvey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

President

Homestead Valley Community Council